



NEWS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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**17 NEW HUNTING, FISHING PROGRAMS
ARE ANNOUNCED BY FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is opening 17 new hunting and fishing programs in America's National Wildlife Refuge System, ranging from small game hunting in Alabama to surf fishing at Midway Atoll in the Pacific.

With the new openings, the Service now offers a total of 290 hunting programs and 307 fishing programs on the 514 refuges and many waterfowl production areas that make up the nearly 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, the largest and most diverse network of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife in the world.

"The focus of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been to provide America with high-quality outdoor experiences through our magnificent National Wildlife Refuge System. Many of our refuges offer world-class hunting and fishing opportunities," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark. "The fact that we continue to expand these hunting and fishing programs is a tribute to our refuge managers, who do a fantastic job nurturing fish and wildlife resources on individual refuges."

New hunting programs include:

Alabama: Mourning doves and bobwhite quail as well as rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, and opossum at Key Cave National Wildlife Refuge.

Rhode Island: Canada geese at Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge. (Program is regulated by the State of Rhode Island).

West Virginia: Coot, rails, snipe, woodcock and mourning doves, squirrel, rabbit, grouse, hare, and white-tailed deer, black bear, and wild turkey at Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

New fishing programs include:

Guam: Surf fishing at Guam National Wildlife Refuge.

Hawaii: Silver perch, moi, and ahole-hole at Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge.

Louisiana: Speckled trout and redfish at Breton National Wildlife Refuge.

Midway Atoll: Surf fishing and lobstering at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

New York: Largemouth bass, striped bass, and bluefish at Amagansett; fluke at Oyster Bay; striped bass, brook trout, perch and about 35 other species at Seatuck; and bluefish, striped bass, and black fish at Target Rock national wildlife refuges. \

Rhode Island: Surf fishing at Trustom Pond, Pettaquamscutt Cove and Sachuest Point national wildlife refuges, and fishing for tautog, bluefish, and striped bass at Block Island and Ninigret national wildlife refuges.

Washington: Fishing for salmon and crabs and digging for clams at Dungeness and fishing for sea-run cutthroat trout and salmon at Nisqually national wildlife refuges.

Refuge system hunting programs typically include such *migratory birds* as ducks and geese; *upland game* such as pheasant, quail, rabbit, squirrel, wild turkey, and partridge; and *big game* such as deer, elk, moose, and bear. *Fishing programs* include, among others, catfish, bluegill, crappie, striped bass, trout, salmon, and steelhead as well as various species of surf fish.

The Service annually reviews fishing and hunting programs on national wildlife refuges to determine whether they should be added, modified, or excluded.

Expanding fishing and hunting opportunities on the National Wildlife Refuge System implements the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act signed in 1997 by President Clinton. That law outlines four priority public uses for the refuge system: fishing, hunting, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. An earlier Executive Order on recreational fisheries requires agencies to expand fishing opportunities on Federal lands. Including this year's additions, 49 new fishing programs and 30 new hunting programs have been initiated during the Clinton Administration.

In 1996, 77 million U.S. residents, or about 40 percent of the population 16 years old and older, participated in wildlife-associated recreation activities spending \$101 billion. Of this group, 35.2 million enjoyed a variety of fishing opportunities and 14 million hunted, while nearly 63 million enjoyed at least one type of wildlife-watching recreation activity including observing, feeding, or photographing fish and other wildlife.

Recreational visits to national wildlife refuges generate substantial economic activity; in 1995, recreation-related spending generated more than \$400 million in sales in regional economies. As that spending flowed through the economy, it

supported 10,000 jobs and provided nearly \$170 million in payrolls.

Since the first refuge was created by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903, the National Wildlife Refuge System has grown to include 514 refuges and thousands of waterfowl production areas. At least one refuge is located in each of the 50 states and U.S. territories and insular areas.

Some 30 million wildlife enthusiasts visit refuges each year, fishing and hunting, birdwatching, hiking and engaging in nature photography. Hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren visit the refuges each year, studying nature, wildlife, and the environment.

Hundreds of refuges are strategically located along major migratory bird flyways, and dozens were established to protect endangered and threatened species. National wildlife refuges teem with plants and animals of virtually every variety, from mallard to moose, walleye pike to whooping crane, cactus to caribou. At least one national wildlife refuge is located within an hour's drive of almost every major city in the United States.

More information about the National Wildlife Refuge System is available by calling 1-800-344-WILD or by visiting the Fish and Wildlife Service home page at www.fws.gov and clicking on the "National Wildlife Refuge System."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 500 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.